

Numbers Chapter 17 – Aaron’s Rod Buds, Blossoms, and Bears Fruit

In Chapter 16, Korah and members of the tribe of Reuben led a revolt in which they claimed equality with Aaron and his sons, the priests. God demonstrated His judgment between Moses and Aaron on one side and Korah and the rebels on the other by opening the earth to swallow the rebels up. Still, the people grumbled against Moses and Aaron, saying that they, and not God, had killed the rebels. God immediately sent a plague through the camp to destroy the sinners, a plague which was stopped by Aaron’s intercession. In Chapter 17, we will read about how God confirmed the priesthood of Aaron. **Read Nehemiah 9:16-21**

Read Numbers 17:1-5

Why is God initiating this demonstration of His choice of Aaron? When the Israelites “murmured” or “grumbled” against Moses, who are they really complaining against? In what way is God showing His mercy and care for the Israelites by this demonstration?

What did Jesus say about a generation that “asks for a sign?” (Matthew 12:39). Yet, in what ways did God indeed provide clear signs that Jesus was the Messiah? **Read Psalms 103:7-14**

Read Numbers 17:6-8

God confirmed the priesthood of Aaron in a remarkable manner. God had each tribe select a rod. These would have been pieces of wood, probably picked up out of the desert. Perhaps the walking sticks of each captain, beautifully decorated or carved. They were dead wood, and Aaron’s rod was as dead as the others. The budding, blossoming, and fruit-bearing of Aaron’s rod, then, was a resurrection from death to life! In the spring, plants that have been dormant spring to life. That is not resurrection. But a piece of dead wood springing to life is the perfect picture of resurrection. Aaron was God’s called high priest (Hebrews 5:4), and the evidence was the budded rod – resurrection.

As Aaron’s priesthood is confirmed by the resurrected, budding rod, the priesthood of Jesus is also confirmed by resurrection from the dead. Jesus was from the tribe of Judah, and in Hebrews 7, we are reminded that Jesus did not come from the tribe of the Levites, so on earth, he was not eligible to be a priest. But because he was obedient to death, and because he rose again and is seated at God’s right hand, he is our priest forever. Even Jesus did not take his priesthood upon himself, but earned it with his obedience to God the father. **Read Philippians 2: 5-11; Hebrews 5:4-10**

What does it mean to have Jesus as our high priest and mediator? It means we have a priest who never changes; He “always lives to make intercession” for us (Hebrews 7:25), and it means that the intercessor who is ever present at God’s right hand interceding for us is one who understands our infirmities. **Read Hebrews 4:15-16**

Read Numbers 17:9-10

Aaron’s rod was kept for a testimony and a token. It became one of three items kept in the ark of the covenant, along with the jar of manna (Exodus 16:33-34), and the two stone tablets of the testimony that contained the 10 commandments (Exodus 25:16). **Read Hebrews 9:4**

Consider the significance of the three items. The stone tablets were, of course, the tablets “of the testimony” to be placed into the “ark of the testimony,” or “covenant.” They reminded the people of God’s coming down to them from heaven to establish His covenant relationship with them, a foreshadowing of Christ coming to earth.

Aaron’s rod foreshadows the priesthood of Christ, as discussed above.

The manna also provides a foreshadowing of Jesus. Manna was provided in response to the people’s grumbling after they were brought out of Egypt. It was provided as a test of their obedience. **Read Exodus 16:2-5**. The jar of manna was collected and was miraculously preserved throughout their generations, and “Aaron placed it before the testimony to be kept,” (Exodus 16:34 ESV), a reference to the tablets of testimony later placed into the ark.

The “test” of the manna is whether Israel will learn to rely on God to sustain them, not only in their physical needs, but in all aspects of their lives, which should be lived in accordance with God’s word. **Read Deuteronomy 8:3**

Jesus is the true manna, which gives eternal life. **Read John 6:47-51**